

Mares Head Down the Bridle Path

A new NRCHA Award will honor bridle mares.

The National Reined Cow Horse Association (NRCHA) Board of Directors has announced a new award to recognize the accomplishment of NRCHA bridle mares. These are the mares who continue on in competition once they've graduated from a snaffle bit and into a curb bridle--expertly finished reined cow horses. Unfortunately, most well-bred mares go from a season or two of competing in a snaffle bit and then gallop off to the broodmare band.

The idea for the award came from Bert and Lori Hornback of Runaway Creek Ranch in Southern California. They worked with sculptor CR Morrison to create a beautiful and unique bronze trophy to be called the "Runaway Creek Outstanding Bridle Mare Award." The Hornbacks hope that this award will act as the incentive so that more mares will be shown into the bridle.

Each year an individual plate will be added to the perpetual trophy, naming the high scoring mare of the prestigious NRCHA Snaffle Bit Futurity Open Bridle class. Also noted are the names of the breeder, rider and owner. The trophy will be updated to include the names of the Snaffle Bit Futurity Open Bridle Class champion mares from the past. A total of 8 mares have won the honor, from 1974-2006.

The Hornbacks decided to create the award after their mare, Smart Plain Pep, won the Open Bridle at the NRCHA Snaffle Bit Futurity in 2006.

Lori recalls, "We realized how few mares had won this prestigious event, with only 3 in the last 13 years and only eight since the event began. There seems to be a drastic reduction in mares that were being shown and/or winning major bridle events in recent times. We found this odd, considering technological advances in breeding have made it easier than ever before to both breed and show a mare," she says, referring to procedures such as embryo transfer.

She continues, "While many people talk about the importance of the mare bloodline, few actually show their great mares through the mare's best performance years in a bridle. We believe that if more recognition and incentive existed for mares, maybe this could change... That is the focus of this award, to memorialize the great reined cow horse mares."